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Golf legends tee up for charity

By Jeff Bryan Chronicle staff
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Ernie Els watches a practice range shot Tuesday, Feb. 15, at Black Diamond Ranch's Legends of Golf Day to benefit the Els for Autism foundation. The charity assists individuals and families impacted by autism spectrum disorder.
Matthew Beck / Chronicle photo editor

As Peter Jacobsen was introduced, phones came flying out of pockets and purses.

Jacobsen with an ensemble of Nancy Lopez and Jim Furyk put on a clinic Tuesday at Black Diamond Ranch. The clinic was both humorous and insightful as the three golf legends shared their insights into their careers and what has, or had, allowed them longevity on their respective tours.

Jacobsen was the highlight, more so for his humorous impersonations of golfing legends such as Lee Trevino, Gary Player, Raymond Floyd and Arnold Palmer.

"If I could do Tiger Woods, I would him every day, because my career would have been a lot better than it was," Jacobsen joked.



They were three of 11 players who descended upon Black Diamond Ranch on Tuesday for the second annual Legends of Golf Day, a benefit for the Ernie Els Autism Foundation and the Black Diamond Foundation. Both organizations were the beneficiaries of the star-studded event, which had folks taking plenty of photos and videos of a notable who's who of the PGA and LPGA stars.

Scanning down the line, amateur golfers and spectators caught glimpse of Ernie Els, Rocco Mediate, Fred Couples, David Toms, Jay Haas, Steve Flesch and Woody Austin warming up prior to the start of the charity golf event, which also included John Daly. Each golfer was paired with a foursome of Black Diamond Ranch members.

"We want to thank you for your support and sponsorships," Els told the crowd. "(Martin) has all the best intentions for this event and for the community. It's a team effort as you know."

The Ernie Els Autism Foundation, located in Jupiter, Florida, assists 300 youths with programs and therapies while also providing adult services, Els said.

The Black Diamond Foundation provides funds throughout the community, from the Thanksgiving Day Feeding Alliance to scholarships to high school seniors in the county.

"I want to thank all of the (professionals) here that came here from everywhere," Els told the crowd. "We really appreciate it and the cause for us is always autism."

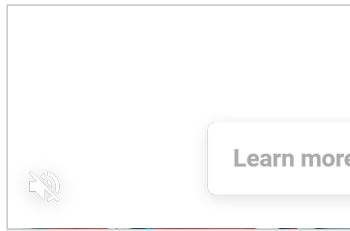
Martin Courtois, a Black Diamond resident, who has caddied for the likes of Mediate, brought the idea to Els years ago. Together, the pair brought the event to fruition.

"We have 11 of the truly greatest players to play the game, maybe except Woody," Courtois quipped, noting this year's event raised three times as much as a year ago. "It's really a good day, a full field. We appreciate the support from the amateurs."



Nancy Lopez speaks Tuesday, Feb. 15, during a seminar teaching tips to improve a golfer's game. Lopez won 48 LPGA tournaments including three major tournaments in her career as a professional golfer.

Matthew Beck / Chronicle photo editor



Jeff Bryan is executive editor of the Citrus County Chronicle. Contact him at jeff.bryan@chronicleonline.com or 352-564-2930.

Jeff Bryan
Executive Editor